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Poland: The Resistance

A heavy snowfall covered Poland last week, but could not bury a Christmas of black despair. The crowded churches rang more with sorrow than joy, and Archbishop Jozef Glemp spoke out for "the families who have been harmed, disappointed, imprisoned, slandered without good reason." In many homes, Christmas dinner was a leftover memory of past happy feasts, and the place that Poles traditionally leave at the table for a wandering stranger was reserved this year in honor of imprisoned workers. The candles that twinkled from windows served not as decorations—but as silent symbols of resistance.

The government of Gen. Wojciech Jaruzelski continued its mailed-fist purge of Polish reform and Polish reformers. The first massive military sweep sent thousands of workers, intellectuals and priests to freez-

It persists against the crackdown—with support from Reagan, who also lays down a challenge to Moscow.

ing makeshift detention camps. In Gdańsk, birthplace of Solidarity and a seedbed of resistance, tear-gas attacks broke up street marches by as many as 40,000 workers and students. Last week the government forces concentrated on clearing out the biggest remaining pockets of protest. But the resistance lived on in workers who only pretended to work, in farmers who held back their produce—and in the hearts of all who ever made common cause with Solidarity. It added up to a tide that might not overflow into the streets—but could well drown the struggling economy. "When the country was first sealed off, people were scared and passive," said Andrzej Swatek, a spokesman for Solidarity in Copenhagen. "But when they shook their first fear, they started to create resistance." And, he added: "Poles are very good at resistance."

In Washington Ronald Reagan delivered a Christmas message to Americans that was heavily weighted with indignation over a "Polish Government [that] wages war against its own people." In a husky voice, Reagan told of his emotional meeting with Romuald Spasowski, the Polish ambassador who had defected to the United States a few days earlier (page 16). At Spasowski's request, Reagan ordered a candle lit for Poland on Christmas Eve in a White House

window and asked Americans to light candles as well to signal that "the light of freedom is not going to be extinguished."

Without waiting for support from the European allies, Reagan put such direct heat on Jaruzelski as he readily could. He suspended Polish fishing rights in American waters, terminated Poland's civil-aviation privileges in American skies and cut off Polish access to the Export-Import Bank. Government-sponsored food aid to Poland from the United States will be restored, Reagan said, only if independent agencies such as the Red Cross are permitted to distribute the food in Poland. Poland can expect more U.S. economic aid if it relaxes its grip, he added—and even tougher measures if it doesn't. "If the outrages in Poland do not cease," the President declared, "we cannot and will not conduct business as usual with the perpetrators and those who aid and abet them. Make no mistake: their crime will cost them dearly."

Showdown: Reagan's tough words were also pointedly addressed to the Soviet Union. In a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, Reagan asserted—as he paraphrased it in his speech—that "if this [Polish] repression continues, the United States will have no choice but to take further concrete political and economic measures affecting our relationship." By holding Moscow directly responsible for Poland's turmoil, Reagan publicly escalated the crisis in the Soviet bloc to a superpower showdown over the "freedoms that the Polish people cherish." Though the President issued no immediate sanctions against the Soviet Union, White House advisers said Moscow should not regard Reagan's words as rhetoric but as a portent of reprisals to come.

Brezhnev quickly answered Reagan's letter with one of his own. The contents of the letter were not disclosed, but publicly Moscow denied Reagan's charges of Soviet interference in Poland, characterizing them as "slander." Then Pravda came back with an extraordinary tit for tat: a 3,600-word article claiming to detail a 30-year CIA effort—code name: Redsox-Redcap—to overthrow the Hungarian, Czechoslovak and Polish Communist regimes.

In Warsaw, Jaruzelski himself replied directly to his critics for the first time, insisting in a conciliatory Christmas Eve speech that martial law is "decidedly a lesser evil than the fratricidal conflict which not so

long ago stood at our threshold." He denied persistent reports of many more deaths than the seven admitted by the government, insisted that prisoners were being held in humane conditions and stressed that "there is room for self-managing and really independent trade unions"—although he said nothing about Solidarity leader Lech Wałęsa, who was held incomunicado for the second straight week. "Dear countrymen," Jaruzelski said, "I cannot today wish you a merry and prosperous Christmas. This year's holiday is modest. But it is safe."

EXCERPTED

JOHN BRECHER with JØRGEN PEDERSEN
in Warsaw, DOUGLAS STANGLIN in Bonn,
SCOTT SULLIVAN in Paris, JOHN WALCOTT
in Washington, SETH MYDANS in London,
DANIELA PETROFF in Rome and bureau reports